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ABSTRACT

The Corporation for Public Broadcasting funded a national study of public radio programming since 1986. The 1996 programming study was conducted by National Public Radio's Audience Research department and had participation by 633 stations. Two-thirds of the stations reported broadcasting 24 hours per day, compared to one-third of stations in 1986. The study divided public radio formats into six music format bases--classical, jazz, world music, folk, pop, and eclectic--and three talk format bases--news and information, entertainment, and targeted audience. Two-thirds of stations' broadcasts were music based, and classical or jazz described three-fourths of the music broadcasts. Most stations had news and information each week, broadcast weekdays by 92% of stations, Saturdays by 84%, and Sundays by 82%. All stations aired both local and national programming each week. Public Radio International (PRI) programming was carried by 87% of the stations, surpassing the 84% carrying National Public Radio (NPR) programming. Two-thirds of public radio's music programming was locally produced, while stations relied on national distributors for most of their news and information and entertainment programming. Classical music averages were highest in the eastern time zone. Jazz had the highest averages on the coasts and in areas with populations greater than one million. Urban areas had the highest averages of news and information. Stations with the largest budgets broadcast the most news and information, and had higher averages of classical music. The nationally syndicated programs with the highest percentage of stations carrying them were "All Things Considered" (70%) and "Morning Edition" (69%). (SWC)

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Highlights of the PUBLIC RADIO PROGRAMMING STUDY FISCAL YEAR 1996

by Lisa Nackerud Ryan

The Study

CPB has funded a national study of public radio programming since 1986. The 1996 programming study had participation by 633 stations.

Two-thirds of the stations reported broadcasting 24 hours per day. Ten years earlier in 1986, one-third of the stations were 24-hour stations.

Public Radio Formats

The study measured carriage of 82 formats which were grouped into six music format bases and three talk format bases.

	Percent of Stations		Percent of Weekly Broadcasts	
	1995	1996	1995	1996
Classical Music Base	75%	76%	35%	34%
Jazz Base	86%	86%	17%	16%
World Music Base	78%	76%	4%	4%
Folk Music Base	70%	71%	3%	3%
Pop Music Base	40%	39%	7%	6%
Eclectic Music Base	18%	21%	2%	2%
News and Information Base	95%	94%	28%	29%
Entertainment Base	89%	88%	4%	4%
Targeted Audience Base	45%	45%	2%	3%

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Two-thirds of the stations' broadcasts were music based and classical music or jazz described three-fourths of the music broadcasts. Jazz based programming was found on more schedules (86%) than classical base (76%); however, the weekly average of classical music (69 hours) was more than twice the weekly average of jazz (29 hours).

Most of the stations had news and information each week. It was broadcast weekdays by 92 percent of the stations, Saturdays by 84 percent, and Sundays by 82 percent.

Most of the entertainment programming (76%) occurred weekends and nearly half was broadcast on Saturday. Saturday evening at 6 p.m. during PRI's *A Prairie Home Companion*, entertainment carriage peaked with 51 percent of the stations. Earlier in the day, NPR's *Car Talk* and PRI's *Whad'ya Know?* also appeared on many schedules.

	Peak Carriage	
	Hour	Percent of Stations
Classical Music Base	Weekdays, 10 a.m.	**54%**
Jazz Base	Saturday, 11 p.m.	42%
World Music Base	Sunday, 11 p.m.	27%
Folk Music Base	Saturday, 8 p.m.	21%
Pop Music Base	Saturday, 10 p.m.	15%
News and Information Base	Weekdays, 5 p.m.	**80%**
Entertainment Base	Saturday, 6 p.m.	51%

The peak carriage of the week for classical music programming occurred weekdays at 10 a.m. when 54 percent of the stations aired classical. The other music formats each reached their highest carriage of the week during weekend evenings.

Weekdays at 5 p.m. the stations were the most likely to have made similar choices in programming: eighty percent were airing news and information.

The broadcast shares have shifted slightly since 1992: the classical music share has decreased and the shares for news and information and other formats have increased.

	Percent of Weekly Broadcasts			
	Classical Music Base	Jazz Base	News & Info.	Other Formats
Spring 1996	34%	16%	29%	22%
Spring 1995	35%	17%	28%	21%
Spring 1994	35%	17%	27%	21%
Spring 1993	36%	16%	27%	21%
Spring 1992	39%	16%	27%	20%

Sources of Programming

All of the stations aired both local and national programming each week. In 1996, the total broadcasts were equally divided between local and national programming. Prior to 1996, local programming had a majority of the week's broadcasts by a slight margin.

	Percent of Stations		Percent of Weekly Broadcasts	
	1995	1996	1995	1996
Local Programming	100%	100%	51%	50%
National Public Radio	88%	84%	23%	22%
Public Radio International	84%	87%	15%	17%
Other National Sources	96%	95%	11%	11%

Public Radio International (PRI) programming was carried by 87 percent of the stations, surpassing the percentage carrying National Public Radio (NPR) programming (84%) for the first time in the study. The stations averaged forty hours per week of NPR programming and thirty hours per week of PRI programming.

Most of the stations (95%) broadcast programming from at least one of the "other national sources." These broadcasts accounted for eleven percent of the total.

Weekdays at 10 a.m. the largest share of the stations (76%) were producing their own programming. Local programming carriage remained high until afternoon drive time began. It accounted for 73 percent of the broadcasts weekdays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

	Peak Carriage	
	Hour	Percent of Stations
Local Programming	Weekdays, 10 a.m.	76%
National Public Radio	Weekdays, 6 a.m.	67%
Public Radio International	Saturday, 6 p.m.	55%
Other National Sources	Saturday, 3 p.m.	30%

NPR's peak carriage occurred weekdays at 6 a.m. during *Morning Edition*. NPR carriage was also high during its evening counterpart, *All Things Considered*.

PRI's carriage reached its height on Saturday evening at 6 p.m. during the live broadcast of Garrison Keillor's *A Prairie Home Companion*. PRI carriage was also strong (30% to 40% of the stations) during the overnights with their three services: *Classical 24, BBC World Service*, and *Jazz After Hours*.

Saturday at 3 p.m., when many stations broadcast opera, carriage of other national sources was at its peak (30%).

Format Carriage by Source

Two-thirds of public radio's music programming was locally produced. Classical music (52% of the total music broadcasts) had the smallest share of local productions with national distributors providing nearly half of the broadcasts.

Stations relied on national distributors for most of their news and information and entertainment programming. NPR provided 61 percent of the news and information and PRI provided 47 percent of the entertainment.

	Percent of Weekly Broadcasts			
	Local	NPR	PRI	Other Sources
Classical Music Base	52%	6%	22%	20%
Jazz Base	84%	5%	5%	6%
World Music Base	63%	0%	26%	11%
Folk Music Base	84%	10%	1%	5%
Pop Music Base	91%	0%	9%	1%
Eclectic Music Base	100%	0%	0%	0%
News and Information Base	13%	61%	18%	8%
Entertainment Base	15%	22%	47%	17%
Targeted Audience Base	89%	0%	3%	8%

Targeted audience programming, including ethnic, religious, instructional, and children's programming, was mostly locally produced (89%).

Source Carriage by Format

Local productions were most likely one of three format bases: classical music (35%), jazz (27%), or pop music (12%).

The stations' NPR broadcasts were primarily news and information (82%). The majority of the PRI broadcasts were classical music (44%) and news and information (31%).

	Percent of Weekly Broadcasts			
	Classical Music Base	Jazz Base	News & Info.	Other Formats
Local Programming	35%	27%	7%	31%
National Public Radio	9%	4%	82%	5%
Public Radio International	44%	5%	31%	20%
Other National Sources	58%	8%	21%	13%

Carriage Patterns by Location

Classical music averages were highest in the eastern time zone. Jazz had the highest averages on the coasts and in areas with populations greater than one million. The urban areas also had the highest averages of news and information.

	Average Number of Hours per Week		
	Classical Music Base	Jazz Base	News & Information
Total	69	29	48
Time Zone			
Eastern	79	33	45
Central	72	29	52
Mountain	59	21	42
Pacific	55	30	48
Alaska/Hawaii	22	11	53
Area Population			
less than 100,000	58	22	46
100,000 to 249,999	68	26	50
250,000 to 499,999	74	31	42
500,000 to 999,999	78	28	40
1,000,000 to 2,499,999	89	50	52
2,500,000 or more	50	40	70

Central time zone stations (33% of the stations) had the highest averages of NPR programming and eastern time zone stations (39%) had the most PRI programming.

Carriage Patterns by Budget Size

The stations with the largest budgets broadcast the most news and information, an average of 61 hours per week. They also had higher averages of classical music.

The poorest stations broadcast less news and information and more targeted audience and pop music. Limited resources also corresponded with increased local productions.

	Average Number of Hours per Week		
	Classical Music Base	Jazz Base	News & Information
Individual & Network Flagships	62	35	45
Budget Size			
less than $300,000	22	36	29
$300,000 to $449,999	56	51	28
$450,000 to $599,999	56	44	42
$600,000 to $749,999	43	35	50
$750,000 to $999,999	86	31	39
$1,000,000 or more	73	30	61

Nationally Syndicated Programming

We found 219 national programs with carriage of at least one percent of the stations in 1996. News and information described the largest share (40%) of the national programs, classical music described 26 percent, entertainment described 15 percent, and jazz described 11 percent.

The top syndicated programs in terms of percentage of stations carrying were as follows in 1996:

National Program	Percent of Stations
All Things Considered	70%
Morning Edition	69%
Weekend Edition Saturday	65%
Weekend All Things Considered	63%
Car Talk	62%
Weekend Edition Sunday	60%
A Prairie Home Companion	52%
The Thistle and Shamrock	43%
Music from the Hearts of Space	41%
Rabbit Ears Radio	41%

The Methodology

National Public Radio's Audience Research department conducted the research. The stations were contacted four times per year and a minimum response rate of ninety percent was achieved each quarter. Participation in the study has grown from 269 stations in 1986 to 633 stations in 1996. The most substantial increase in participation came in 1991 when we expanded the sample to include all stations benefiting from financial assistance from CPB which included the addition of the network repeater stations. The report highlights the findings of the spring quarter survey results.

If you have questions about this study, please contact Janice Jones at CPB. Her telephone number is 202-879-9677 and her e-mail address is jjones@cpb.org. We also welcome any comments or recommendations you may have which would make the data more useful.

Lisa Nackerud Ryan spent eight years working in National Public Radio's Audience Research department and is currently an independent consultant.